



A FEATHER

FROM THE WORLD'S WING

LOGAN

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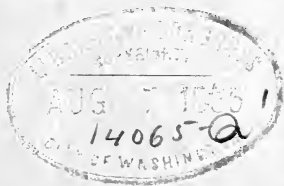
A FEATHER  
FROM THE WORLD'S WING.

A MODERN ROMANCE.

BY

✓  
ALGERNON SYDNEY LOGAN,

AUTHOR OF "THE MIRROR OF A MIND," "THE IMAGE OF AIR," "SAUL," ETC.



PHILADELPHIA:  
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## P R E F A C E.

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HE who should see in the present book a passionate appeal in favor of any particular opinion or set of opinions would not read it aright. The time for passionate appeals has passed away. Their clang has become unpleasant to our sensitive ears.

Modern machinery is much more noiseless than that in use fifty years ago. The same is true of the machinery of the modern mind. Our intellectual mills are grinding up old beliefs, opinions, customs, with a speed which few of us would wish to accelerate; but there is neither clash nor jar. Many even fairly cultivated people scarcely perceive the process.

To preach in verse against tyranny, though more

pardonable, is fully as inartistic as to preach in favor of it; and the following composition would attempt, no matter how feebly, to be a work of art, and not an emancipatory sermon. The province of Art is portrayal rather than discussion, and my endeavor has been to portray a phase of our modern existence which, I believe, has not been hitherto intentionally depicted. This I would call—and the name seems not unapt—the absolute phase. The germs of it are, I believe, in most young persons, taking the form of vague aspirations, which the necessities of life soon dissipate. Almost all of us, however, have known some youth (for extreme youth is the first necessity) in whom the mental state I would call the absolute had attained a seemingly unnatural development. It is this typical condition I have sought to describe. To me it seems one of the most interesting stages of human life; since, when considered in the gross, it is the lash of the steeds of Progress, of which our later and wiser phases are the reins.

In examining this epoch we find much to attract and much to repel us ; for, as it is the formative stage, and as the laws which apply to matter apply to mind, we find in this chaotic, inchoate period attraction and repulsion the chief forces. And attraction and repulsion are not merely impressions created in our own minds by the contemplation of this elemental phase : they have their rise and being in the state of mind of which we are speaking, and act outward upon all things around. What we feel is merely the rebound.

If I have, in any sort, succeeded in delineating this absolute phase of life, with its plethora of self-sufficiency and its lack of self-confidence, with its selfishness and its devotion, its ignorance and wisdom, its absurdity and sublimity, I am satisfied.

It may, perhaps justly, be said that the long-winded monologues are inartistic ; but it should be remembered that the period I am attempting to draw is not an artistic period, and that to portray it

artistically would be inartistic. I believe the egotistical monologue to be a very important symptom of the absolute phase.

The question as to the moral tendency of such accurate sketching is the old one which divides the two schools of *Art for art* and *Art for morals*. My dictum would not decide it; so that it seems only necessary to remind the reader that if all the young Edmonds in the world were turned loose at once upon society, with full power to force all their crude ideas into practice, they would doubtless make more or less havoc; but that in actual life society is let loose upon them, and succeeds in taming them without the smallest inconvenience to itself, sometimes, indeed, making of them the chiefest of its ornaments.

Those who regard a romance with a palpable moral as little better than a geometrically painted picture, will not here feel the want of a moral of obtrusive shape and hue; but there are still many

art-loving persons to whom a good, plain, measurable moral is not ungrateful. These may, perhaps, find in the catastrophe a sufficient reminder of the danger attendant upon quitting well-trodden paths, and, indeed, the question,

“Is it not better, then, to be alone,  
And love Earth only for its earthly sake?”

is one to which one may well hesitate before giving a reply.

A. S. L.

PHILADELPHIA, June 3, 1885.



A FEATHER  
FROM THE WORLD'S WING.

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CANTO I.

I.

WHAT boots it where these scenes are laid?

Suffice it that there are such scenes.

Why mark the very spot, the blade

Of grass on which the fancy leans?

One common country owns us all,

Where'er the Western sunbeams fall.

The land beneath whose new-turned soil  
The future, like the locust, sleeps.  
Near by, she, mountain-like, doth foil  
The eye by wild unsightly steeps—  
But cross the ocean, would you see  
The whole in its sublimity.

Who calls her to the coming race?  
Columbia looks across the sea,  
And meets Britannia's thoughtful face;  
But green traditions creepingly  
Have round her lovely limbs entwined,  
So close they every movement bind.

Mother of freedom, France! thy child  
Roams homeless still, though thou dost keep  
His image in thy bosom wild—  
I love thee, and with thee I weep,  
Beholding the dull weight of care  
Thy hapless citizen must bear :



Weighed down by weapons, that he may  
Confront his watchful enemy;  
From books and musings torn away,  
To learn the trade to make men die;  
Oppressed by prying legislation,  
The bane of every age and nation.

Still farther on, a darker scene—  
Behold a helmet broad and strong,  
With golden spike and glitt'ring sheen,  
Beneath it crushed a countless throng  
Stifled and cramped, and still oppressed  
By toilsome dreams—they do not rest.

Gaze over Europe's face, and see  
How man beneath the shadow sits  
Of an ingenious tyranny  
Which shames the very Jesuits—  
See plastic youth its chosen prey,  
Its lesson, "Question not—obey."

The sage ball-cartridge forced to learn ;  
Philanthropists the bayonet ;  
The great free-thinker made to turn,  
The puppet of the martinet—  
The grand accomplished end sublime,  
To march mankind to funeral time.

They say we *think* not (envy-twitched)—  
Perchance 'tis true. But they stand still—  
Our instinct used, and boldly hitched  
To our great wain, outruns their skill.  
Which gives most promise, which is best,  
Unconscious speed, or conscious rest ?

Columbia, sure thou hast a wing  
To bear thee far above their flight—  
It may seem but a slender thing  
To one who sees not latent might—  
'Tis this—Great Presence, do I err ?  
*Thou dost not love the lawgiver.*

For thou, and thou alone, art teaching

The first great lesson for the free,  
All-comprehensive and all-reaching—

It is responsibility.

Compulsion, try, and try again,

Thou ne'er shalt frame one citizen.

II.

The snow was banked against the pane,

Each ivy leaf its burden bore ;

The last flake falling grazed the vane,

And nestled on the roof; the roar

Of the old pines was low or loud,

As ever to the blast they bowed.

The orb which lights, but never warms,

Like ship that leaves the land a-lee,

From forth the towering cliff-like forms

Of the white clouds drew steadily ;

Sending pale messengers below  
To glimmer o'er the paler snow.

A world of white ! the sailing moon,  
The clouds, the universal snow ;  
Fair nature lies as in a swoon,  
Pale, cold, still, beautiful—ah, how  
Can scenes like this of nothingness  
Our thoughts subdue, our hearts oppress ?

'Tis Matter's might which bids us bow  
Before her still supremacy ;  
The only infinite we know,  
Cradle and grave of all we see—  
Hearts quail before the eternal state  
Which decks her power inanimate.

Wild Tobehanna's hemlock shades,  
Mont Vélan's pallid pyramid,

The boundless plains where blooms and fades  
The prairie rose, and where forbid  
Shadows may dwell not, these all wear  
The self-same strange abstracted air.

The indifference of one who reigns  
By effortless necessity,  
Whose unapparent might remains  
And moulds the things that live and die,—  
Of one who waits some distant day  
Beyond all thought, far, far away.

Ye tortured of the earth, who deem  
Your torturers omnipotent,  
Turn to the ocean, lake, the stream,  
The mountain, or the forest bent  
By the free wind—nay, turn, and see  
Their palsied, blind infirmity.

Ye mourners of the heart, who weep  
    O'er evanescence and decay,  
O'er mutual vows, which *one* did keep,  
    O'er hopes now memories, flesh now clay—  
Seek the inanimate, and cull  
The sole bloom indestructible.

Ye victims of the mind, who pine  
    To impinge upon Futurity,  
Who live beyond the hour, and twine  
    Your thoughts with shades of thing to be,  
Who faint beneath the feverish strain  
To fix the phantoms of the brain,

When daily things of loathly hue  
    Rise up between you and your aim,  
And blot the far entrancing view  
    With beckoning forms and eager claim—  
To nature turn, and strive to be  
Faint image of her constancy.

Look backward o'er man's trodden path,  
    'Tis Matter bounds the horizon ;  
And save that far before he hath  
    But shifting clouds to gaze upon,  
Where'er he turns there meets his eye  
A palpable Eternity.

His life and all it holds most dear,  
    Fame, Fortune, and Philosophy,  
The laugh, the jest, the rising tear,  
    Calm Friendship's clasp of constancy,  
And lovers' lips that warmly press,  
Brief camp-fires in its wilderness.

E'en sceptics who deny thy might,  
    Great Matter, worship at thy shrine ;  
And journey far by day and night  
    To view thy fairest forms divine—  
By instinct is this homage wrung  
From man to that from whence he sprung.

## III.

In the old armor-groaning times  
Men's life was nearer their ideal,—  
A thick-set man, as shown in rhymes,  
Whose brain alone might be unreal—  
Nay, smile not, for they chased their idol  
With reeking spur and hanging bridle.

But our ideal is so subtle  
That few men know of its existence,  
Unlike that firm fish called the cuttle,  
Which always needs the teeth's assistance ;  
Since all men so substantial find it  
That few can eat it absent-minded.

The school Romantic is no more ;  
The school grotesque, I ween, is fainting ;



The hand of Fame is still before

The new name which she now is painting—  
Some letters show—perchance her scrawl  
May read, THE INTELLECTUAL.

When the world's heart is purer far,

When the world's eye is doubly clear,  
When thought untrammelled, like a star,  
Above the horizon doth appear,  
Shall Poetry not lift her head,  
And sing the living, not the dead?

IV.

Within behold no chivalry

Of lords and dames in proud array,  
But just a simple company,

The fleeting children of to-day,  
Who now must trim in their brief turn  
That lamp which doth forever burn.

A sombre hall, despite the blaze!

The spirit of the olden time  
Wandered unvanquished; yet the rays  
Did timidly but glowing climb  
O'er autumn leaves embalmed, and ferns  
And flowers niched in figured urns.

And to and fro were many straying,  
Absorbed and whispering as they went;  
While some o'er flowers were delaying;  
Some formed in noisy groups; some bent  
With their soft careless modern grace  
O'er cracked wild paintings of the chase.

Upon a sofa of green leather  
Sat three who figure as examples,  
As neatly clipped and pinned together  
As silks when sent to dames for samples;  
One bore a look upon his brow  
Which was not mindless, even now.

His aims were once beyond his powers ;  
But disappointment brought contraction,  
Till, aimless now, he filled his hours  
With painful sneers for those in action—  
He turned his feet from side to side,  
And gazed on them with thoughtful pride.

Two maidens garnished him like truffles,  
And while he gazed, in solemn thought,  
They gazed on him, and through their ruffles  
Some tincture from his musings caught.  
O Reader, if their conversation  
Were served, 'twould prove a cold collation.

Around them, and above them all,  
There hummed a dull spasmodic sound,—  
As wind-filled mantles rise and fall,  
Now swollen high, now on the ground—  
Anon it ceased—a moment after,  
There came a rattling peal of laughter.

Turn whence the sound proceeded most,  
And passing through an open door  
Behold a mingled, motley host  
Of young and old. And still the roar  
Grew louder, as some entrance new  
Found welcome from the nearest few.

The lights' clear penetrating glow,  
Like to Lycurgus' flowing hair,\*  
To all the hideous gave a blow,  
But cast a necklace on the fair,—  
Light universal, overflowing  
All things, and every object showing.

'Twas a great modern room whose red  
Deep-folded curtains swept the floor.

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\* It will be remembered that Lycurgus' reason for causing his Spartans to wear long hair was that it made "the ugly more hideous and the beautiful more lovely." This idea forms a curious contrast to our modern notion of universal handicapping.

The walls were high and light, and shed  
The white blaze back again, which bore  
Fresh breath and life to paintings two,  
Hung opposite, one old, one new ;

For light is pictures' air. The one  
Was a dark, twilight, hemlock scene :  
The watery pathway of the cone  
Speeds on beneath the eternal green ;  
Round fallen trees and boulders gleam  
The hoary eddies of the stream.

And from the torrent, ambered deep  
By mining roots of thousand pines,  
Dark shadows slowly upward creep,  
Commingling as the day declines ;  
But on a distant wooded hill  
Some rear-guard sunbeams loiter still.

Above a high, carved mantel, where  
Diana, full of idle grace,  
Reclined with a voluptuous air,  
While swept afar the eager chase,  
There was the likeness of a dame  
Of other days, yet still the same.—

Not like old portraits ghastly gray,  
Loose hanging upon frescoed walls,  
Which look as if upon the day  
When died their quaint originals,  
Death swept a shadow o'er their flush,  
Retouching with a colder brush—

So clear the light within her eye,  
So free the blood upon her cheek,  
It seemed that she in passing by  
A window had but stopped to speak;  
So that her snuff-box and quaint dress  
Were startling almost to distress.

If that old portrait on the wall,  
From her high vantage-ground above,  
Had gazed upon the festival,  
With a time-questioning glance which strove  
To catch the spirit of the host,  
On one her gaze had lingered most.

He stood amidst the thickest throng,  
And yet the mingling life which streamed  
Its rays upon his being strong  
Was like the light that round him gleamed,  
It could not reach his heart's deep place,  
But flickering played upon his face.

For that new principle of thought  
Diffused like life through all the rest,  
And yet so widely faintly wrought  
That it in each was scarce confessed,  
Had on his heart condensed, until  
He owned its weight and felt its chill.

He bore no tragic look of gloom,  
No cynic's guise, by which despair  
Is made a dead life to assume,  
Becoming an empoisoned air;  
With interest upon all around  
He turned a gaze close and profound.

It was as if he deemed mankind,  
Their thousand motives good or ill,  
Were light chips by some sibyl blind  
Commingled, yet related still,  
And he the fragments would compare,  
And form one full mosaic fair.

He wore the air of over-thought,  
It seemed as if his strong young frame  
Were strained to meet the havoc wrought  
By toiling towards some hidden aim,  
Or slowly tracking skulking truth,  
With endless toil, from earliest youth.



For one so young, his face was stern,  
His mouth was hard, with sharp-cut lines ;  
Yet through the whole a light did burn,  
Even as the firefly dimly shines  
Through an illumined night-closed flower,  
Soft glimmering at the twilight hour.

There was a something in his eye,  
A sense of distance in its gaze,  
Which daunted near reality,  
And called back scenes of other days—  
Bird-voices, clouds, and woody slopes,  
Entangled with forgotten hopes.

And yet methinks, if judge I may,—  
Who should not judge, who tell the tale,—  
His look and manner both betray  
A heart too absolute, too frail  
In human sympathies, too prone  
To make its world, and live alone.

But now, bent o'er a lady fair,  
With whisper low, he laughed as gay  
As if his every thought were there  
(The vulgar only are *distract*)—  
Sudden he turned, and raised his head,  
For some one at his elbow said,—

“Edmond, she sings to-night.” “Who sings?”  
“Helen”—the rest was lost; for he  
Who spoke passed on; the voice, like rings  
Of smoke, which rise distinct and free,  
Was swept away, deprived of form,  
Before the eddying wordy storm.

Then Edmond turned, with languid air,  
To a young relative near by,  
And asked her if she did not care  
To fashion this celebrity,  
Now formless, in his mind; she tried  
To look unnettled, and replied,—

“ You have not been presented, then,  
To this your hostess' guest, nor knew  
That she was here—if a large wen  
Upon the marble forehead grew  
Of the great statue in the square,  
I doubt if you would even stare.

“ How long she may intend to stay  
None know”—her eye with mischief gleams—  
“ You'd better ask her, by the way,  
'Twill keep you from more dangerous themes.—  
She comes from” . . . sudden they both felt  
Their speech into their hearing melt.

A slowly disentangling sound  
Through the thick voice of that close throng  
Crept softly up, and spread around,  
Unaided, yet wild, clear, and strong ;  
For no accompaniment was there,  
Save the vibration of the air.

That sweet ungovernable tone  
    Rose up as silvery bubbles rise  
Through heavy waters, till alone  
    It filled all ears with paradise.  
With growing confidence she sang—  
This song through sudden stillness rang :

    The moon with her viewless hands,  
Transparent, light, and free,  
    Was parting a place  
    For her dreamy face  
To gaze on the troubled sea.

There were bells in wave-washed hands  
Which tolled eternally ;  
    There was roar on roar  
    Far down the shore,  
And laughter out to sea.

There were four on the sands to-night,  
Two shadows and two forms—  
    Behind and before  
    Flew the froth on the shore  
And foam on the land of storms.

Need shadows or shapes more light ?

O which has the firmer home ?

Which stabler stuff,

The moth-like fluff,

Or the bird-like flying foam ?

O heart-uniting kiss !

O bosoms beating free !

O eye-lids wet

With joy ! and yet—

The wild bells out to sea !

Through the languor of the kiss

Which wrapped them tenderly

Came the steady roar

Far down the shore,

And the laughter out to sea.

Her voice's fingers ceased to sweep

That harp aërial, thousand stringed,

Viewless and vast, which yet can keep

No sound, though all by it are winged ;

First plaudits came, but no one stirred,

And then a sudden hush was heard.

There was an essence in the tone  
As of a subtle, thought-fed flame,  
By which a glimmering light was thrown  
On their past lives ; till each one came  
To see how far his path had strayed  
From hopes which once his being made.

Before life's stream above them rolling  
Had turned them round and round and round,  
Their thoughts and wishes all controlling,  
Till by its current they were ground  
To an unvarying shape and hue,  
Cheating the search for beauty new.

Like paltry mice that gnaw the dead,  
Each sight of the world's power, each sigh  
Of stifled hope or wakened dread,  
Will eat away identity.  
Each day our saliencies doth cull,  
As thorny trees catch flocks of wool.

There was a something in the tone  
Which made all feel "How sweet to think,—  
To be one instant all alone,  
And seeming into being sink"—  
A moment more, the waves closed in  
With an augmented, boisterous din.

All felt relieved to be once more  
Upon well-known, well-trodden ground :  
And each bethought him of his store  
Of current pleasantries ; and found  
That, unawares, a thought-immersion  
Had chilled, till then, his self-assertion.

But unto Edmond, in the tone  
There rang an echo of his thought :  
Although to her who sang unknown,  
Like wind through clouds, there was inwrought  
Throughout a chafing 'gainst constraint,  
And freedom from all earthly taint.

His air indifferent, which made  
Him many an enemy, was gone.  
He crossed the room ; the words were said  
Which form acquaintance' neutral dawn ;  
He sat as near as he might dare,  
With a familiar, playful air.

There was not, as romancers love,  
A sudden flashing forth of mind,  
A single sentence deftly wove  
In which their life-thoughts were entwined—  
Romantic reader, be not hurt,  
The truth is, they began to flirt.

What contrast ! she with golden hair,  
Dark eyes, and all-pervading grace—  
He gray-eyed, dark as she was fair,  
And with a stern, medallion face,  
Bearing an inward look which lay  
Beneath his features' ceaseless play.



Their lips were active, and their eyes  
    Interpreted their speech aright ;  
They felt an inner glad surprise,  
    A thrill ecstatic, and a might,  
A consciousness of power to please,  
Which made excitement, mixed with ease.

They scarcely marked the words they said ;  
    But she was conscious that he took  
Her fan, and twirled it round, and made  
    Each pert speech bear a tender look.  
While they are laughing at a jest  
Of moderate worth, glance at the rest.

Alas ! the female rank and file  
    With drooping hands and eyes that wandered,  
And many a weary studied smile,  
    Sat emblems of existence squandered ;  
Each guarded by some near relation—  
Sad victims of false education.

A bore (though that is scarce distinctive,  
Since all bore all except themselves,  
Save those endowed with wits instinctive)  
Was ransacking his empty shelves,  
And holding one impatience-mad,  
Who just had spied a careless lad

Of twice his beauty, half his age,  
And versed in every amorous wile,  
With his betrothed—O gods of rage!  
She bent low with a blushing smile!  
Thrice had his heart transfixed the bore—  
Relief came from the opening door.

A man whose waistcoat mocked his face,  
A statue cut in chocolate,  
Flung wide the door with easy grace,  
And with a smile and air elate—  
His potent wordless look let loose  
The flood-gates of the gastric juice.

And each one gently led away  
    A softly simpering sylph, to where  
There gleamed a silver-loaded tray,  
    While round it spread the sumptuous fare ;  
In dual order all marched in,  
Each popping cork their culverin.

## v.

Below, the house is still and dark,  
    And all above, save that between  
The long lace curtains, like a spark,  
    A dim and lonely light is seen,  
Where more than one fair girlish guest,  
With her from far, prepares for rest.

Pink shoulders glisten glazed and round,  
    And many a flaccid garment white  
Is held from slipping to the ground  
    By elbows jealous of the sight

Of the full hip and loosened waist  
Through their thin drapery dimly traced.

Young laughter low fills all the room ;  
And Raillery, Youth's friend, with naught  
To mark him, save a fragile broom,  
To brush away the seeds of thought,  
Controls each light heart beating fast  
With memories of the revel past.

As gay as if the tree of life  
No shadow cast athwart the world,  
A thousand questions mischief-rife,  
All fling at each ; full deftly hurled,  
A hail of malice lightly pays  
Those whom the evening crowned with bays.

But when on Helen turns the stream  
Of girlish jests she hoped would pass,

Her eyes shoot forth an angry gleam—

She turns away—and though she was  
The loudest there but just before,  
Says least—perchance to dream the more.

## CANTO II.

## I.

THE fairest hour of all the year!

A winter's early afternoon :

The sky was blue, the air was clear ;

A tint half pink and half maroon,  
Crept up above the horizon,  
Despite the feeble western sun.

The happiest hour of all the year,

Which frees the heart and fires the eye,  
While on the cheek of health appear

The colors of its evening sky ;  
With avarice we breathe the air,  
So pure, transparent, cold, and rare.

A spell to wring care from the brow !  
    'Tis ere the twilight hath begun,  
While fir-tree shadows darker grow,  
    And hill-tops redden in the sun,  
To whirl across the glittering ice,  
With swinging foot and rare device.

II.

She sat beside a window high,  
    The central casement of the pile ;  
She marked the cloudless, deep blue sky,  
    And Nature's cold and marble smile—  
The very spirit of the year,  
So beautiful it was not drear.

Before her stretched the snowy lawn,  
    A valley 'twixt the towering pines ;  
And where some giant limb was gone  
    The sunlight streamed in serried lines

Across the dry and frosty snow,  
With lengthening forms and deepening glow.

By Winter's hand alone revealed,  
    The distant village street was seen ;  
Beyond a mead in part concealed,  
    Its windows caught the western sheen ;  
And nearer rose a maple tall,  
Whose leaves are golden in the Fall.

Upon the mead a spring-house old,  
    With rotted roof and fallen beam,  
Lay slowly sinking in the mould,  
    And choked by refuse of the stream ;  
Beside it Indian canes were massed,  
Which hummed and whistled in the blast.

There, too, were ancient water-willows,  
    And at their feet a tender spring,



Whose gentle flow and tiny billows  
• Beneath the ice went murmuring.  
Near by, there stood a sun-dial old,  
With signs and figures manifold.

She gazed upon the wintry scene,  
And not upon the things around ;  
The curtains, with their figures green  
Embroidered on a sombre ground,  
Came sweeping round her, rich and warm,  
And almost hid her yielding form.

It was no room—but on the stair  
There was a landing deep and broad,  
Windowed, room-like, luxurious ; there  
Were carpets springing as the sod ;  
The sofa in the deep alcove  
Seemed even designed for scenes of love :

For it was wide enough for two,  
And yet so narrow that the fair  
Who nestled in that seat with you  
Must brush your forehead with her hair ;  
And o'er your cheek her soft breath straying  
Made it a pleasure there delaying.

Around were mummies of the air,  
On mossy perch set stark and high,  
Two owls with strange and glassy stare,  
A jay-bird, too, in act to fly—  
And more of such slight straw-like things  
To which the drowning memory clings.

A sketch and some engravings rare,—  
Quaint, costly vases filled with flowers,—  
And, framed, a lock of snow-white hair,  
Pale, long-enduring tomb of hours  
That lie afar ; a table, too,  
With books of every size and hue.

Thin pamphlets upon Atheism,  
    To prove his eye-teeth now are cut ;  
Fat tomes to show how faith the schism  
    Between the churches soon must shut—  
With novels, too, for women's reading,  
Where Love must always think of breeding.

And this, "Who lives must vote,"—and this,  
    "The Prussian system as a blessing ;"  
Near by, in an unloving kiss,  
    The Westminster and British pressing—  
The whole an emblem of society  
Befuddled out of all sobriety.

He's like a dog with a new master,  
    The old one fading from his view,  
He moves now slower, and now faster,  
    Now sits him down with head askew ;  
To follow which he scarce can tell,  
Yet limps along with whine and yell.

Her rounded, half-reclining form,  
Her leaning head and sweeping tress,  
Her skin so white and colors warm,  
Her foot in peeping carelessness,  
All made a sight so fair, the eye  
Grows dim to think such things must die.

Her mien was sad, for she was still—  
The face at rest is always sad—  
Her thoughts were careless of her will,  
And strayed afar—perchance she had  
Some vision faint of Edmond there,—  
For who can tell? he, too, was fair.

And then they had so often met  
Since that first eve, and many an hour  
She had listened almost with regret  
To his low voice's thrilling power,  
Still questioning accepted things,  
And seeking for life's secret springs.

New creatures of the mind, a throng  
That called him master, when he spoke  
Came rushing forth and swept along  
Terribly beautiful, while broke  
And fled in cloudy volumes curled  
The old opinions of the world.

And when he ceased, and ere the flood  
Of daily life had swept between  
And blurred his words, fair Helen stood  
In a new world of nobler mien,  
Or so it seemed ; for blooming there  
Was Freedom's rose, and on the air

Its incense magical.—That unplucked flower  
Which is the moral Alpine rose,  
And blooms where highest mountains tower ;  
Still smiling o'er the awful snows  
And lofty ledges wrapt in sleet,  
Which check man's climbing, bleeding feet.

It seemed the world must sure be changed—

And yet a moment hence she saw  
The idols he had shattered ranged  
In potent state, without a flaw,  
While all around her bowed the knee,  
And boasted of their dignity.

And thus the contest in her mind

'Twixt what *seemed* true and what *was* strong,—  
A feeling also scarce defined  
That all that's sweetest *must* be wrong,—  
Her thoughts in strange confusion kept,  
Like reeds by eddy breezes swept.

Perchance, although she knew it not,

What most of all her fancy led  
Was earnestness which self forgot

In all he thought, in all he said—  
A man of any strong belief  
Is now a striking *haut-relief*.

What wonder if a thought of him  
Should ever and anon appear,  
Now as a starlight shadow dim,  
Now close beside her strong and clear,  
Yet so accompanied that the eye  
Still failed to mark its frequency ?

She sat unconscious of the hour  
That brushed her with its downy wing,  
And swept beyond—it had no power  
To deal upon so fair a thing ;  
But with its airy pinions fanned  
The foliage of her fairy-land.

Her eyes, though moveless as her form,  
Breathed not the same abandonment,  
They imaged back now calm, now storm,  
On ever-changing shapes intent—  
Unearthly mirrors where each thought  
In sublimated form was wrought.

They were not large, but purest brown,  
And clearer than the mountain spring—  
They had a look, 'twas all their own,  
A look of earnest lingering,  
As of a softness scarce revealed,  
By high unconquered pride concealed.

As to the mountain spring 'tis given  
To image every change above,  
Till it becomes an earthly heaven,  
So every phase from scorn to love,  
The soul's whole history, from her eyes  
Flashed forth, a living Paradise.

They were not lustrous, swimming orbs,  
Of timid heart and vain desire,  
Whose cloudy brilliancy absorbs  
And dissipates the inner fire—  
They had a tingeless beam divine,  
As stars when viewed from mountains shine.



III.

A foot-fall on the winding stair !

She heard it not, but gazed without ;  
Yet Edmond stood beside her there,  
While restless roamed his glance about,  
Till suddenly it fell upon  
The thing he sought—his breath was gone.

His parted lips were still as clay,  
And one foot slowly backward stepped,  
As it would bear his form away ;  
While o'er his cheek a pallor crept,  
Gray as the dews of early morn,  
That glisten on September's corn--

Faint as the blue in moonlight, or  
The tint upon a sea-flower's cheek,

Or shapes of trees and shrubs before

The morn begins the East to streak—

'Twas faint as all of these, yet clear—

'Twas early love's companion—fear.

Upon a wild and blooming mead

Whoe'er has stopped, and looked behind,

Has seen the flowers from 'neath his tread

Rise slowly up, though still inclined—

So slowly did he gain control

Of his bewildered, panting soul.

With leaded feet, but steady mien,

He crossed in silence from the stair,

And glided to her side unseen,

And with a half-caressing air

Sat down beside her in the groove

Of the old panelled deep alcove.

She started—and a wingèd cry  
    Sprang to her lips, but rested there ;  
For turning quick she met his eye—  
    And o'er her face, confused but fair,  
There rippled forth a sudden blush,  
With far diffused and spreading flush.

As welcome to that gazer's eye,  
    In tint as lovely, as the rose  
Which first beholds June's deep blue sky,  
    While comrades still are in repose ;  
Whom kissing dews have waked, with fear  
To be the season's pioneer.

Her color deepened, as she laughed  
    With beautiful embarrassment ;  
But even now excitement's graft,  
    From fear, the trunk on which it leant,  
Had sprouted wild—in mutual tease  
And jest, they felt,—no not at ease,—

But a sweet fever, a desire

To push each other towards the brink;  
With icy hands and head on fire,

They trifle, showing, though they shrink,  
That trembling eagerness which gives  
To light words power o'er human lives.

Perchance their limbs e'en lightly touched—

They knew it not, or if they did,  
The happy senses quickly clutched

Perception's robe, and gently bid  
Her turn and look another way,  
Which she did willingly obey.

Unconsciously their eyes began

To gain a deeper, softer light,  
A tremor through their being ran,

Their world seemed fuller, and a might  
Voluptuous languished in each vein—  
'Twas like the quick surcease of pain.

Unconsciously their voices fell

Lower and lower, till the tone  
Was like the tremble of a bell

When the stroke ceases ; there alone,  
They felt their horizon expand,  
Like one who finds an unknown land.

Her hand is at her lover's lips,

Cold as a flower before the dawn—  
He breathes, as from his clasp it slips,

“ You love me ? ” Turning towards the lawn  
And rivalling its sunset glow,  
She whispers, “ I could love ”—when lo !

The banister, that friend to age,

Gave forth a sudden creaking sound,—  
The steps groaned as in fear and rage,—  
A smothered wheezing upward wound,—  
A heavy foot toiled up the stair—  
An inmate elderly was there !

Their breath was short from passion—hers  
From her late combat with the stairs;  
And as she slow removed her furs  
She talked of thousand trifles—theirs  
It was to stand with flashing eyes  
And burning cheeks, and blurt replies.

How much the small round eyes might see  
They knew not, scarcely cared—their hope  
Was from the presence to be free,  
And give their prisoned feelings scope—  
But pretexts fly from scenes of flurry,  
As shirt-buttons from scenes of hurry.

At last, with unremembering mien,  
Helen remembered that that day  
She had not once the green-house seen—  
The sun was low—she feared the gray,  
Long, winter shadows would confuse  
Its tints, and blur the flowers' hues.

And thus they hastened forth, when he  
    Had first around her wrapped a shawl,  
Dark, fringed, and broidered curiously—  
    They stood within the antlered hall—  
Around her slow he drew its fold  
With lingering fingers scarce controlled.

And as he drew his hands away,  
    Perchance they swept the full round form,  
As lightly as a snow-flake may  
    A leaf which trembles in the storm—  
And Helen trembled, while her cheek  
Was like that leaflet's crimson streak.

Along the snow-cut walk they passed  
    'Twixt lines of peeping box—their eyes  
Were downcast, and their hearts beat fast—  
    Their forms were colored by the skies.  
Slow grew their steps as on they went,  
White-breathed, sun-tinted, forward bent.

## IV.

A moment leave them, if but one—

    Their feelings who can separate ?

Self-consciousness was almost gone,

    Save a strange heart-gripe, half elate—

A painful waking into life

Of hopes and fears, of calm and strife.

A moment follow Edmond's thought

    In its involuntary range.

In vain to rouse himself he sought,

    Against his will the scene would change—

His mind flagged, overtaxed and strained—

The past upon his footsteps gained.

He stands, as oft a boy he stood,

    In Pennsylvania's wilderness—



A clearing in a mighty wood

Whose dark ranks on it seem to press ;  
Around the sumach gleams like fire,  
Massed thick with wild-flowers, brush, and brier.

And underneath the sumach's red,

Its brown and furry branch is seen,  
Like deer-horns in the velvet ; dead

And lichen-coated stumps between  
Peep dully forth ; and over all,  
With golden slant, in patches fall

Warm Autumn sunbeams, populous

With darting moths, and poised flies,  
And clustered gnats all nebulous ;

Amidst, a barkless tree doth rise,  
Upon whose forked and pointed limbs  
The reddening sunlight slowly climbs.

The outlaw hawk his watch-tower finds  
Upon its topmost branch, so still  
He seems a branch, save that the winds  
Oft raise his feathers like a frill.  
Who looks aright upon such scenes  
Upon a power immortal leans.

'Twas but a twitching of the brain,  
A flash of the o'erwilful mind,  
A consciousness akin to pain,—  
And yet in words how slow defined—  
Thoughts have an eye which all things sees,  
But words feel on by slow degrees.

## v.

How tangled on the warm moist air,  
The perfumes of a thousand flowers!  
The blooms of an acacia fair  
Fell down in meteoric showers,

As they, unmindful, jarred the door,  
And paced the raised and latticed floor.

They joined the beauty of the scene,  
A part unconscious, even as those  
Whose many-colored ranks between  
They slowly passed ; the gentle blows  
Of overhanging petalled sprays  
Could not awake their outward gaze.

Pale callas and azaleas white,  
And heliotropes flashed ruby-hued  
In the long-threaded, deep red light  
With which their fibres seemed imbued—  
Save only the outrivalled rose,  
Which sank into a pale repose.

The young flood of their lives has come !  
The pathway to one side was bent

At the end of the long glassy dome—

Here Helen turned, and turning leant,  
With grace which turmoil could not dim,  
Upon the old wall's wood-bound rim.

Her eyes flashed full upon her lover,

But sank as quickly to the ground,  
As if his thoughts she would discover,

Yet feared an import too profound—  
A moment Edmond silent stood,  
Then spoke in concentrated mood.

“ You know I love you—words are vain

To paint the passion in my breast,  
Yet must I say it o'er again,

And o'er, and o'er, until oppressed  
By joy—one only thought is clear,  
'Tis I who speak and you who hear.

“For the mere breathing of this word,  
Its simple utterance twixt us twain,  
E'en though but for a moment heard,  
Forges a mystic, viewless chain,  
A mutual knowledge hid from all,  
Which time and change can ne'er recall.

“The sense that there exists a link  
Between a thing so fair and me,  
I feel,—for now I cannot think,—  
Is joy as boundless as the sea;  
I feel new force within my frame,  
My being is not all the same.

“I boast no pure platonic flame,  
No spiritual love divine,  
My heart I cannot, would not tame,  
To prate with desultory whine,  
Of disembodied souls united  
And ghosts in holy union plighted.

“What is a love that sex denies?

’Tis friendship, liking, what you will,  
Aught, anything but love—it lies,  
And calls itself a prince; but still  
Forgets its part, and asks for alms,  
With abject mien and shaking palms.

“Nay, ’tis a pale and jaundiced thing

Born of a sickly phantasy,  
Suspicious, ready to take wing,  
And feeding but on vanity—  
A thing that waits and bides its time—  
But patience is love’s greatest crime.

“The brutal peasant’s dull desire,

The dreamer’s chilly preference,  
Are peers—but oh! the living fire,  
Still fed by soul, and fanned by sense,  
This, this is love, and it is mine—  
Oh, may I whisper, Is it thine?

“My eyes like things within a net,  
Can never struggle from your charms,  
I—nay, I *will* be bold—and yet—  
I die to press you in my arms,  
To feel the beauty that I see,  
And worship its reality.

“You hear me; oh! the boon is much—  
Yet would you quickly shrink away,  
Recoiling from my lightest touch,  
Like ripples from the breezes play,  
Or struggling endmost leaves,—or rills,  
Or echoes, springing from the hills.

“It is no hour for measured speech,  
Yet ere yon ruddy clouds grow gray  
With early age, I fain would teach  
You what I am. How hard to say  
That which may—No, when on the brink,  
Upon the gulf 'tis death to think.

“ I ne’er shall deem, as deems the world,  
That woman is a drifting thing,  
Meant but to float with sails all furled  
And rotting useless where they cling,  
While others skim along the deep,  
And toward the far horizon sweep.

“ I could not treat you as a child,  
To be cajoled, deceived, caressed,  
Deluded, dazzled, and beguiled,  
By silken, jewelled cords oppressed—  
No, no, I love you! hear and see  
The truth, and choose your destiny.

“ Oft would I leave my comrades’ play  
To follow morning mists on high,  
Swift ghostly guides which swept away  
Towards the mountain-tops, while I  
Toiled after them, until I gained  
Gulf-peering rocks, whose necks seemed strained—



“ Serrate, snow-sifted, awful things,  
Forgetful of their nature,—striving  
With outstretched beak and stony wings  
To fly from the bleak summits,—living  
Chained by one foot alone—while under  
Roll unopposed blasts, clouds and thunder.

“ No life was there, save thoughts that dwell  
In airy desolation—these  
Made populous the cliffs, the dell  
Shrunk to a shade, the adventurous trees  
Which clung beneath, the distance that  
Pillared my feet while there I sat.

“ Oft did my childish footsteps roam  
Where lives the otter, turtle, eel,—  
The widgeon’s and the black-duck’s home,—  
Wild sedges of the snipe and teal,—  
Those boundless marshes green and fair,  
Which fringe the mighty Delaware.

“The red-winged blackbird singing swung  
Upon a low-bent reed ; near by  
A cat-tail o’er the water hung,  
And dipped, and dipped, and constantly  
Let fall one drop, whose life expanded  
In circles dying ere they stranded.

“And I—I gazed, and gazed, and dreamed,  
So still the musk-rat brushed me by ;  
Above me far the fish-hawk screamed,  
The buzzard floated in the sky ;  
While in my heart rose thoughts profound,  
The children of the scenes around.

“I dared to dream of Liberty—  
She seemed in Nature’s image framed,  
But with a fairer destiny—  
Like her all boundless and untamed,  
And like her ne’er to know surcease,  
Yet, unlike her, still to increase.

“ I dared to think—I think so still—

That man o'erburdened cannot climb,—

That man may, must obey his will,

His compass on the sea of time—

That needle true which from afar

Still points towards Progress' polar star.

“ There is a freedom higher still

Than that which takes embodied form

In states that own the people's will,

And keep the hopes of millions warm—

It is the freedom of the mind,

Whose limits ne'er shall be defined.

“ It is the right conferred by Thought

On him who wears her cognizance—

An hour, with this motto wrought,

*I cannot turn, but must advance—*

To act upon his heart's behest,

His own tribunal in his breast.

“ I gaze across the moving world,  
And see one stationary thing,—  
Still as a winter’s leaf all curled  
And cold upon the breast of Spring—  
Oh, why must woman live beneath  
The shadow grim of moral death?

“ What is her life from infancy?  
To be the chosen ward of age—  
That stolid guard with leaden eye,  
Who hints no life beyond her cage—  
So trained to darkness that her sight  
Shrinks aching from a ray of light.

“ She is the sport of words, the scene  
Of life’s most lifeless tragedy,  
The shuttlecock which flies between  
Prescription and Propriety ;  
Her thoughts are hamstrung as they rise,  
Her hopes are smothered spite their cries.

“ O'er the world's snow her instincts peering,  
Bright hyacinths of her new-born Spring,  
Their petals innocently rearing,  
And timidly as they would cling  
To a stray sunbeam, sink 'neath feet  
Which wait their forms in pulp to beat.

“ But what are woman's rights? To bear  
The brunt of life's necessities?  
In toil and progress both to share?  
Ay; but her right eternal is,  
To love when, how, and whom she would—  
Her chains are on her womanhood.

“ The modern man—not him of old,  
Who stalks about in modern dress—  
That human flesh is bought and sold  
Can never learn; companionless,  
He moves amongst a captive throng  
Whose thoughts do not to them belong.

“ They say that woman loves the grave,  
That she is with her lot content,  
As lately 'gainst another slave,  
Now free, the self-same bow was bent—  
This is their argument: the lower  
The fire, the less it needs the blower.

“ There is a feeling in the world,  
A ghost from the long-buried past,  
That life would be in chaos hurled,  
If hearts were not in irons cast—  
Then progress is thy fruit, O tree,  
Swift fading now, of tyranny!

“ The laws on usury and trade  
Were deemed the guardians of mankind—  
Where are they? Yet their loss has made  
The liens which modern life doth bind—  
Does then the nobler part, the soul,  
More than self-interest need control?

“As men place screws in coffin-lids—  
Place to remain—Opinion makes  
Youth's heart a fixity—then chides  
Its still cold dream which never wakes—  
That ships may quickly come to land,  
Pray nail the compass to its stand.”

He turned to her and faintly smiled,—  
A trembling smile ;—thus far the flow  
Of his own passion had beguiled  
The crisis of his thoughts : but now—  
He sudden gazed into her eyes,  
Yet saw no clear-drawn answer rise.

She looked the feeling in her heart,  
'Twas that of one, who from some deep  
And gentle dream awaked in part,  
Would back into the vision creep—  
He nearer drew, and 'gan to speak  
With softer voice and paler cheek.

“ The world would drive me from your side,  
    To seek the lowly and the vile—  
For only wealth can take a bride,  
    On him alone dare beauty smile—  
Or I must wait and toil till I  
Can smother love in luxury.

“ What, must I wait as Youth now waits,  
    Deep in the selfish search for gain,  
His hands, but not his heart the State’s,  
    Careless of others’ joy or pain,  
Dead to all public thought?—O men!  
Why is not Youth a citizen?

“ Oh, must I live, like Youth, a priest  
    In all but hood and shaven crown,—  
One of a caste apart,—released  
    From that sweet bond round others thrown,  
With no bright chain of sympathy  
And love between mankind and me?



“Or may I dream that life is fair  
And pure as latticed moonlight? We  
But note the image it may wear  
To us. Can you repeat with me,  
*O Virtue ! thou art guileless love ?*  
May not our hearts in concert move ?

“Oh, can you love me as I am ?”  
She tore a flower to yellow spray,  
And faltered, “In my own room’s calm,  
I have so much that I would say,  
So much to tell ; but when you come,  
I know not why, yet I am dumb.

“And now, ’twere foolish to deny  
That aught that you have said has found  
My heart—to answer I would try—  
But I have thoughts which will not sound—  
Perhaps, if I could once begin—  
’Tis growing late—we will go in.”

Her voice had ever thrilled his heart,  
Liquid and sweet, yet free in tone ;  
But now no language could impart  
Its trembling life, before unknown.  
In all the world there can be found  
To match with it one only sound—

'Tis robins' voices, after showers,  
When sudden bursts the setting sun  
Upon the dripping leaves and flowers,  
And robes them in his mantle dun—  
Hark how their chorus wild and clear  
Sweeps through the freshened atmosphere !

With no endearment, no embrace,  
No pressure of the hand, they turned  
Their footsteps slowly to retrace ;  
But on each cheek a lustre burned,  
Their step was firmer, and their eye  
Flashed faith on treacherous Destiny.

They were as dew-drops which condense  
From out the universal air,—  
Each mortal's breath, but more intense,—  
A part of what is everywhere—  
These flash in heaven's own light arrayed,  
Then vanish ere their colors fade.

They were bright ripples of that river  
Which rushes through the human mind,  
That stream which sweeps along forever,  
Whose gathering volume naught can bind—  
Foam from its current, with a gleam,  
Still eddying onward while we dream.

## CANTO III.

## I.

IN the wild sea-goat's coil the moon  
Hung low upon the Southern bord ;  
The trees' long shadows crept to noon  
Upon their dial of dusky sward.—  
Sleep, shadows, sleep, forget to move,  
Spare the returnless hours of love.

There was no wind, yet sable clouds,  
With moon-lit garments white and fair,  
Swept slowly on ; not massed in crowds,  
But one by one, with pensive air,  
As if their noiseless feet kept time  
To some wild strain, unheard, sublime.

The cricket sang his August song,  
His still-recurring ghostly glee—  
A tone which makes a moment long,  
And images Eternity;  
Making new stillness, even where  
There is no sound, no breath of air.

Naught marred that harmony of gloom  
Which follows dying Summer's days.  
The grasshopper his threadless loom  
Had checked as sank the western rays;  
The rattling locust's scorching cry  
Had ceased while yet the sun was high.

The maple leaves their silvered side  
Turned outward to the moon; for they  
Yielded to a quick gust, which died  
Almost before they could obey,—  
Leaving no currents where it passed,  
Those airy footprints of the blast.

It was no midnight damp and chill  
Such as late August ever knows,  
When night feels a cold shuddering thrill  
While dreaming of the coming snows ;  
'Twas June, without her spirits high,  
And intermittent fire-fly.

The silent, ivy-shrouded mansion  
By contrast seemed as ghostly white  
As when on buttress, roof, and stanchion  
The snow was piled that winter's night ;  
For shades corporeal from each tree  
Replaced their netted filigree.

Across a narrow path which skirted  
A chasm deep where willows grew,—  
By daylight lonely and deserted,—  
The branches tangled shadows threw ;  
And where they fell not, gleamed the grass  
And diamond-glitt'ring isinglass.

From out the weed-encumbered dell,  
Tier upon tier along its bank,  
Trees rose with undulating swell,  
Like wave on wave ; a figure shrank  
Within the border of the glade,  
Where densest fell the ebon shade.

'Tis Edmond ; for a moonbeam now  
Flits o'er his face—an instant there,—  
Yet long enough, alas ! to show  
Already that pain, doubt, and care,  
Love's train, have made his heart their home—  
No more, mayhap, from there to roam.

Doubts of himself, his life, his mind,  
Of the close-woven thoughts of years,  
Doubts of all freedom, of mankind—  
Such doubts assailed him and such fears,  
As o'er the world in parties steal,  
And ever on the wounded deal.

“Is life but our own heart with wings?  
Our deepest theories fretting games,  
One long mistake of thoughts for things,  
A mingling of uncertain names?  
And all our efforts but the one  
To gain the hazy horizon?”

“The hope to find a love which may  
Those forces into being call  
Which we feel dormant in our clay,  
These are not more chimerical—  
A happy man, a singing flower,  
A sailing stone, a generous power.”

His thoughts limped slowly, sadly on:  
“She comes not; I have overweighed  
Each word, each look, and every one  
Of the impassioned hours which made  
Recoil seem but a mockery—  
They melt beneath my very eye.



"I know she loves me ; but her heart  
Has failed. And now, what end, what key  
To all which had become a part  
Of my own life ! to stand and see  
The moonbeams frost the hemlock cone,  
And hear this summer wind—alone."

A sinewy step, but light as down !  
A quick form glanced from shade to shade—  
A stifling net seemed round him thrown—  
Where fled his thoughts of love betrayed ?  
Sudden his blood reversed its flow—  
Helen is on his bosom now !

The embrace seemed as 'twould last forever,  
Yet was the coldest of their lives—  
'Twas only the untaught endeavor  
To catch at aught that respite gives.  
They felt it soon must end, and then—  
Trembling they closer drew again.

She raised her head and gazed around,  
As if seized by some outward fear—  
They heard a rustling on the ground,  
Because they knew no life was near;  
Each felt an inmost dread to own  
That they were thus all, all alone.

They turned and slowly paced along,  
And as they moved beneath the trees,  
Leaf-shadows, clustered throng on throng,  
Swept up their garments, until these  
Dim shapes appeared a dreamy flood  
Still hurrying o'er them while they stood.

And as they went, there oft recurred  
The self-same questions and replies,—  
If aught within the house had stirred,  
And why she came so late—their eyes  
Met not—she answered all was still,  
Like one in sleep deprived of will.

Had they not striven to be alone ?

Had they not planned this hour from far ?  
And now—they could but check a moan,

And gazing on each tranquil star,  
Strive from its beam some thought to gain  
To still their hearts, which throbbed to pain.

There was a bench beneath some willows,  
Which, as the lovers sought their shade,  
Above them rolled their foamless billows ;  
They gained this small and open glade ;  
Unconsciously he spread her cloak ;  
They sat them down, but neither spoke.

A silver birch erect and fair  
Its multitudinous shadow cast  
Even at their feet, and lingering there,  
The moon a white band round it passed ;  
Its trembling shades fixed Helen's eye—  
She dared not move, yet knew not why.

This was their summer home by day,  
No leaf was there they had not seen,  
Yet all seemed strange, and far away—  
Their past as if it had not been;  
They almost wished they had not come,—  
Each strove to speak, yet both were dumb.

They sat as they would sit forever  
Parts of the scene inanimate,  
Like Egypt's sitting forms which never  
Their awful stillness shall abate;  
The moonlight checkered each pale face,  
And lighted their dim resting-place.

From out that all-surrounding deep,  
That silent, phantom-peopled clime,  
That void where all our feelings sleep  
Till they are by the watchman Time  
Called into waking, there arose  
In Edmond, something like repose.

With effort, but untrembling now,  
    He passed his arm about her form ;  
His heart grew sentient ; flow on flow,  
    From that resistance soft and warm,  
A nascent glow began to creep  
Through all his being waked from sleep.

Their heart-beat changed—it swifter grew,—  
    Nay, swift to suffocation, yet  
'Twas steady as an infant's, who  
    In sleep hath nothing to forget ;  
They almost laughed with joy to hear  
Fall clinking down the chains of fear.

As when in some wild-cadenced chant  
    The deep bass sudden volume gives,  
So now in every breath they pant  
    A fulness comes from their past lives,  
Which bodying this hour's soul,  
Gives passionate meaning to the whole.

There, in the old, scooped rustic seat,  
    With willow sweepers round them twining,  
Their warm hearts feel each other's beat,  
    No moonbeams are between them shining,  
They cast one shade. Your longings slake,  
E'en Time treads lighter for your sake!

Oh, how it happened who can tell?  
    The love-opposing brooch, which bound  
With prudish clasp her robe, now fell,  
    And glistened down upon the ground;  
Her bosom flashed forth full and white—  
Then deeply dyed the pale moonlight.

Not the moon's liquid marble flood,  
    Like tombstones melted and diffused,  
Could steal the hue from that young blood,  
    Whose rush her senses all confused;  
Her head sank down upon his breast,  
As birds at sunset seek their rest.

Nature's dim mantle wrapped them round,  
And her soft prompting breath, by day  
Far scattered o'er the world like sound,  
Urging to love all living clay,  
Even to the mites on each flower's stem ;  
Now that all slept, fell full on them ;

And in their glance of languid light,  
Their failing muscles and their frames,  
Which tingled with a pained delight,  
The struggled utterance of their names,  
In their sigh, as they backward leant,  
It found one wild embodiment.

## II.

'Tis moonset, and the trees among  
The moonlight pours, an altered thing,  
It has a life, a spirit tongue  
The senses all bewildering ;

A dreamy splendor reigns whose hue  
Makes pale the real and the true.

The moon shines from the Western bord,  
As only sinking moons can shine ;  
While flashes back from the wet sward  
A glow like phosphorescent brine ;  
Instead of white beams cold and tame,  
Behold one widespread yellow flame.

The trees' black shadows sleep in files,  
Like cloak-wrapped corpses on the field,  
Between them long illumined aisles  
Stretch Eastward. Oh, fair dreamers, yield,  
Before this radiance soft awake !  
Ere Time your bubble rudely break.

Despite the beauty of the hour,  
Which wooes their concentrated gaze,



Despite the waning night's chill power,  
Which fain would cool their blood's bright blaze,  
They dream, as they together press,  
If dreaming be forgetfulness.

Melt into moonlight if ye may !  
While Nature beats your impulses,  
While she is near you, and her sway  
Finds form in yon transfusing kiss,—  
While every intermediate thought,  
And man-born influence is naught.

Melt into moonlight if ye may !  
Behold, it widely round you gleams,  
On every leaf, each glistening spray,  
Each dew-bent blade of grass it streams,  
While softer rays twined with your hair,  
Form halos like the moon doth wear.

Melt into moonlight if ye may!

Oh, leave not soft indulgent Night!

Towards you floating with the day

Comes the harsh world, whose monster might  
Still rises with the sun's red car,  
But pales before the rising star.

III.

The moon with every hindmost beam

And all her shadowy train was gone,  
Like some bright, many-thoughted dream,  
Which flies at the approach of dawn;  
But o'er the farthest Western hill  
A golden memory lingered still.

The middle heaven still was blue,

But opposite, within the east,  
There rose a bright-green matchless hue  
Pale with the thoughts of conquest; beast

And bird, and every living thing  
Felt tremors stir their slumbering.

The winter stars, which told of morn,  
Were high above the horizon ;  
They wore an aspect lost and lorn,  
As if they saw the coming sun—  
How different from the glances clear  
With which they rise to rule the year !

The beings we have followed far  
Awoke, but not from sleep, to feel  
A motion new within life's car—  
But whither ? Though their senses reel,  
A new thought thrills them—it is this,—  
A longer, slower, softer kiss.

The freshness of the early morn,  
The dream-notes of still slumbering birds,

The fragrance of the tasselled corn,  
Unconscious mingled with their words,  
And tempered their wild hearts' excess  
With an o'erflow of tenderness.

Now all unchecked, her head sank down,  
And seemed to melt into his breast,  
While languidly about him thrown,  
Her white arms hung, and she was pressed  
Close to his heart,—but yet both shook  
And eastward cast a troubled look.

They parted, 'tis enough to say—  
What matter how? at last 'twas done.  
They slowly forced their forms away,  
Their backward glances, one by one,  
They loosened from their hold, till these  
Were baffled by the misty trees.

O Future ! whatsoe'er thou hast

For them within thy changing clime,  
Thou never canst excel the past—

Oh, let them stay the hand of Time !  
While their young life-twigg still is seen  
An Autumnless, bright, living green.

Green as the moss on fallen trees

In Susquehanna's wooded valleys,  
Where sunbeams come not, and the breeze  
But with the topmost branches dallies ;  
Where all is moist, where all is still,  
Save the crow's rasp, and trickling rill.

Turn from the hues our life doth wear,

From love, and joy, and fear, and hope,  
Which are but varied names for care,

To that which gives our spirit scope—  
See, Pennsylvania widely spreads  
Her hemlock forest o'er our heads.

Ascend yon hill of sloping green—  
A leafy ocean rolls below  
Its timeless flood, and brightly sheen  
Its billows as the breezes blow ;  
By day 'tis weird, mysterious, dim,—  
By night black, spirit-filled and grim.

The deep, slow laughter of a bird,\*  
With its wild, marrow-seeking thrill,  
At midnight and by moonlight heard,  
Far sweeping through the shadows chill,  
Clutches the 'lated passer's heart—  
Then hurls it onward with a start.

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\* It has been the writer's good fortune to hear the great laughing owl under the circumstances described. There is no mocking malice in the laugh. That were commonplace. It is the blood-curdling indifference to all human weal or woe of the deep tones, as they slowly die away, which makes them so terrible.

Who could not dream his woes away,  
Fair Pennsylvania, by thy pools  
Black with the blood of pines, and gray  
With stumps of perished trees; where rules  
A painless stillness of the tomb,  
A happy, heart-sustaining gloom.

Each heart that mingles with thy scenes,  
When worn by pain or overjoy,  
Will leap the space that intervenes  
And roam thy wilds, once more a boy—  
Imperishable beauty there,  
Which wakes a love that knows not care.

## IV.

The sun is up, and spreads his rays  
Of red and gold o'er earth and sky;  
The air is full of sound; the ways  
Replete with early passers-by;

A city 'neath the horizon,  
Breathes upward smoke of sallow dun.

A thousand thoughts of hate and fear,  
Of selfish interest, and of strife,  
This ruddy radiance broad and clear  
Awakens into eager life ;  
The world's arena's torch is lit—  
The weak to darkness must submit.

Millions, with flashing eyes of fire,  
Nerve for life's gladiatorial show,  
That wave of blood which wafts us higher,  
Source of advancement and of woe ;—  
But two are deeply sleeping now,  
With moonlight dew on each pale brow.



CANTO IV.

I.

A SOUND ! The sound, the one sole sound  
All self-sustaining, echoless,—  
Accompanying music spread around  
Time's slippered feet that onward press,—  
Cadence of thought, all-languaged, free,—  
The world's deep breathing—Hark ! the sea !

Where the wind drives his viewless plough,  
And sows tempestuous seeds, and still  
Sings as he sows—now deep-voiced, now  
In accents dissonant and shrill ;  
While flapping sails and sea-birds' wings  
Keep concert as the giant sings.

A damp air, and a perfume salt  
From thousand flowers growing deep  
In many a fretted, shelly vault  
Where breeze-like currents round them sweep,  
And waft their fragrance fresh afar  
Where'er the eternal waters are.

The ocean far before us spreads,  
Deep blue, with inlaid green and gray ;  
The sun begins to sink, and sheds  
A deepening lustre far away,  
And where the rolling breakers come,  
Flings fresh-cut roses 'midst the foam.

They roll as they have ever rolled,  
With sudden rush and quick return,  
And with white, pointed fingers cold  
Plane the wet glistening sands ; which burn  
With a long, narrow, ruddy glare,  
Though still the sun is high in air.

Above the waters' sidelong flow  
The sand spreads white, and deep, and dry;  
The winds oft lift it up like snow,  
And bear it lightly whirling by,  
Till wreath on wreath and drift on drift  
It fills each new-indented rift :

For 'twixt the billows and the line  
Of hillocks low, whose grass is seen,  
Half-buried, sparsely to incline  
Its sharp-edged blades of light cold green,  
Are tracks of wheels and many feet,—  
As men in crowds were wont to meet.

It is no wild and lonely coast—  
But here men build and congregate,  
To see their little being lost  
Before the might they would abate ;  
For here alone assembled man  
Can cast no shade on Nature's plan.

In twos and threes with listless eye  
Do many indolently stroll.  
Lovers here whisper not—though high  
Their voices, they are in control  
To the stern waves. Two brightly dressed  
Come slow, apart from all the rest.

Can these be they whom last we saw,  
Creatures of moonlight and of shade,  
Embodiments of Nature's law  
Wild beings by the moment made?  
Can these be they? Around in space  
The thought flies without resting-place.

Was it a mere fantastic dream,  
Born of the fevers of the mind,—  
Some memory-freak, some sudden gleam,  
With poetry and midnight twined?  
They look so like the unvaried crowd:—  
But no—'tis they—And yet a cloud

Has dulled their features, and their feet  
• Move heavily, as they would rest,—  
Yet cannot bear those thoughts to meet  
Whose nearing flight is favored best  
By stillness. What they may have been  
Is lost in something dimly seen.

## II.

They moved not with the careless bands,  
That still kept pacing to and fro ;  
With eyes upon the frothy sands,  
Their backs towards the western glow,  
They wandered slowly ever on,  
Till they are with the waves alone.

Then Helen lingered to behold  
The many-floated weeds—some brown,  
Some tinged with amber, some with gold,—  
Oft on the beach a mass was thrown,

Which when the billow ceased to urge,  
Divided the receding surge.

And once when at her feet was seen,  
As from an earthly garden come,  
A broad bruised leaf of brightest green,  
She stooped to pluck it from the scum—  
But memory checked her hand, and then,  
Sighing she wandered on again.

Perchance she seemed a shade,—but no,  
The world has eyes which shame the lynx,  
To scrutinize a woman (oh,  
How from its piercing stare she shrinks!)

'Twas a vain dream, for the world cast  
No glance on Helen as she passed.

They stopped at last and gazed around.  
It was a turning of the shore,

The rounded outer point which crowned  
    A long and gradual jutting ; pour  
The billows here more heavily,  
The breeze comes fresher from the sea.

They marvelled they so far had come :  
    To right and left along the coast  
A white eternity of foam  
    Gleamed on, and on, till sense was lost  
In dreaming of beyonds beyond  
The lines which sea and sky confound.

Red pulpy sea-weeds round were strewn  
    And dark-ribbed shells ; and near at hand  
A wave-greened wreck peeped forth, which soon  
    Must disappear beneath the sand,  
As unprogressive souls sink down  
Amidst life's cares wherever thrown.

A piece of drift here Edmond rolled  
To Helen's feet ; they sat them down.  
Her sun-lit hair flew uncontrolled,  
Now plaited by the winds, now blown  
In massy strands across her face,  
Hiding the sadness of its grace.

Her hand upon his shoulder fell  
As lightly as a flake of snow,  
Within some silent wooded dell,  
And full as white ; and slowly now  
Beside her hand she laid her cheek,  
And sighed a thought, but did not speak.

Her former proudly conscious mien,  
Her half-aggressive, playful air,  
Were merged in a new softness seen  
Pervading all her being fair,  
Like the sweet aspect of a flower,  
Whose beauty is its only power.



Her eyes now followed Edmond's hand,  
Now tearful roamed across the sea,  
While he upon the smooth white sand  
Carved figures strange ; and on her knee  
Resting the arm which held his head,  
He chiefly thought, but partly said :

“ So then our path of life has come  
To this lone point—and stops ; for here  
It merges in yon streak of foam :  
Our happy, glowing, fleeting year,  
Since that bright August night has been  
But prelude to this evening scene.

“ No leaf-obstructed stellar ray  
Was e'er so thin as the slight thread  
Which drags us from sweet life away  
And will not break—'tis doom unsaid,  
'Tis man's opinion unexpressed,  
Which draws us towards unwelcome rest.

“What is our fault? ’tis love—O hate,  
Revenge, and Envy, with lip curled,  
And head erect, and eye elate,  
Ye boldly stalk the applauding world!  
But love, and love in man alone,  
No worth or beauty can atone.

“But now since nothing yet is known,  
And gazing in surrounding eyes,  
No chilling shadow there is shown,  
A phantom future will arise,  
And whisper, O return! this hath  
But been a dream, pursue your path!

“Perchance ’twere stronger to return,  
And bear as much as flesh may bear—  
No heroism here doth burn,  
There’s nothing noble in despair—  
But to behold you—no! Then fly!—  
What means, what wealth for flight have I?

“ The chase of knowledge and of art,  
• The timely flight from conquering pain,  
The power to obey the heart,  
Or o'er the mind's dominion reign,  
Are magic grains which golden flails  
Alone can thresh ; naught else avails.

“ That concentrate, conglomerate throng,  
That stone of which we are the grist,  
The world so concrete, dense, and strong,  
Seems leaving us like blowing mist,—  
As unto those in a balloon,  
The earth seems sinking in a swoon.

“ The world for us is like the bee,  
Which flies and leaves its sting behind—  
Nay, 'tis a spectre suddenly  
Uprising on the passing wind,  
And giving its decree of death—  
Then melting like to frosty breath.

“ We stretch our arms in eager prayer  
For mitigation or reprieve,  
Adjuring but the empty air—  
And yet the fiat stern doth live;  
Thus the world's heart is not of steel,  
But air—O where should we appeal ?

“ To influence mankind's a thing  
For which long lives are but too brief,—  
And we have moments—lingering,  
We would imagine some relief—  
As if the tortoise Thought would speed  
His steady foot for mortals' need.

“ Yet here is comfort, in this state  
Of gathering and encroaching gloom,  
The constant effort to be great,  
My early battle with the tomb,  
The hope to serve my fellow-men,  
Come sweeping brightly back again.

“How have I striven!—nay, still I strive!

For though my form be in the past,  
My thoughts, as I would hope, shall live—

Ideas are in the present cast;  
For written thoughts are living things  
Which from Time's pinions pluck their wings.

“I would expound the toiling sage

To hearts that of his theme would tire,  
Condense the spirit of the age,

And gift it with a tongue of fire—  
Seeds would I scatter which shall bloom  
When hands which sow are in the tomb.

“I fain would strike upon the bell

Which mightier hands than mine have hung,  
Till o'er the world one note should swell,

One all-intelligible tongue—  
The pæan of the mind set free,  
And heart attuned to liberty.

“ But ‘ words are wind’—yea, the wild winds  
That blow throughout thought’s universe,  
Whose unseen power nothing binds—  
Systems and empires they reverse ;  
Yet one may long these wild winds sow  
Before the whirlwind ’gins to blow.

“ My words are forth—but even without  
My humble momentary aid,  
An autumn hangs above the sprout  
From which our bitter cup is made ;—  
But we may not evade the draught—  
’Tis mixed, ’tis here, and must be quaffed.”

His musings’ stream why follow more ?  
Its current and its course are seen.  
Strange might it seem that on this shore,  
With ruin them and life between,  
Edmond could thus control his brain  
Unquelled, unparalyzed by pain.

Yet oh, remember that this thought  
Of doom was not then new, but long  
Had been in all their feelings wrought ;  
Their memories, too, a motley throng,  
Kept back the vultures of despair,  
Though close they hovered in the air.

That rainbow formed by human tears,  
Fair Hope, though faded, tinged their sky ;—  
Their beauty, strength, their youthful years,  
All daunted stern reality ;—  
The habit strong of living made  
Death not a substance, but a shade.

## III.

They saw the sun set red and round,  
With rayless disk and stifled beam ;  
A cloudy belt, by evening browned,  
A giant Saturn made him seem—

In vain he lingers there, for day  
Hath passed him 'midst the vapors gray.

His rim had scarcely disappeared,  
When opposite his sinking place,  
As broad, and round, and red, and bleared,  
The moon rose, with distorted face;  
It seemed the sun beneath the sea  
Had passed and risen suddenly.

As sank the smothered Western rays,  
And as the lightless moon arose,  
They felt a creeping dull amaze,  
A lethargy without repose,  
As far removed from sudden grief  
As from the sigh of blessed relief.

A heavy hand seemed on them laid—  
They fain would rise, but could not try;



Though they had moved not, something made  
    Them stiller seem, even to the eye—  
For know there are two kinds of still,  
One with, and one without a will.

The selvage of their thoughts was gone ;  
    These ravelled off in tangled shreds  
Of ill-assorted colors wan—  
    Faint fancies, memories, hopes, and dreads,  
They fell unheeded one by one,  
From the mind's fabric all undone.

Oft had they felt the same before ;  
    And anywhere but here, perchance,  
A bird, a voice, an opening door,  
    Had snapped this life-absorbing trance,  
And given them time again to wait,  
And ponder deeply o'er their fate.

But here, the unvaried sands around,  
The dim pall of the parted day,  
But most, that deep, full, single sound,  
Kept outer influence at bay—  
Why did they trust themselves alone  
Beside that fatal monotone?

Death's coming steps where'er they fall,  
Upon the dull, sound-beaten coast,  
Or echoing from the dungeon wall  
Of one whose hold on time is lost,  
Cause but one feeling as they near,  
A numbness scarcely mixed with fear.

The very lightness of his tread  
Pervades the ear and numbs the sense;  
A helplessness to wake to dread,  
A dull absorption scarce suspense,  
The fascination of despair,  
Enwrap the mind and hold it there.

Unlike his sudden presence when,  
At moments when all hearts are glad,  
He bursts into the sight of men,  
And drives them in an instant mad,  
These footsteps faint of speed unknown  
Turn all except the ear to stone.

IV.

The horses of their fate stood still—  
Their journey ended with the sands.  
They showed no spirit, life, or will,  
While airy things with viewless hands  
Unharnessed them ; at close of day,  
They led them silently away.

They dreamed no longer of return—  
The coursers of their fate were gone,  
Led off by forms with faces stern.  
Behold them sitting there alone,

Beside the empty phantom wain  
Their souls shall never mount again.

The red lights of the distant town  
Gleam in a faint and broken line ;  
The moon, now risen high, pours down  
Her bluish silver 'midst the brine,  
And lights each sparkling flock of foam  
That leaps from out its boundless home.

Upon the shore their shadows cling,  
And though the moon they must obey,  
Who holds them there, stretch lingering  
Towards the far inviting ray,  
As if they longed away to creep  
From those two forms beside the deep.

And as they move, their shades draw near,  
And seem in eager whispering

To dwell upon some secret fear—  
To life can even a shadow cling?  
They seem with wordless lips to say,  
“Must we, too, follow in the spray?”

It might be but a whiter wave,  
Or moonbeam's more ethereal glance,  
A heavier fall, or higher lave—  
A sudden something broke their trance,  
And gave them power to feel and see  
The deadly, near reality.

His features sharpened, and his face  
Grew waxen, while a troubled look  
Crept 'neath its stillness—in his place  
He upright sat; but Helen shook,  
And bent low with a shuddering moan—  
Each felt, one instant, all alone.

Through her closed fingers oozed her tears,  
A crystalline, condensed despair,  
Like the clear life-blood which appears  
On wounded flowers' stems; as Care  
They gather slow on each pale hand,  
Then dot with deeper gray the sand.

O essence of unmingled pain!  
O spirit of pure agony  
Taking a woman's form! in vain  
Upon the sands thy salt tears lie—  
So used the sands through endless years  
To ocean's salter, painless tears.

How narrow, faint, o'ergrown with weeds,  
The paths of thoughts which lives control!  
How humble, plain, and weak the reeds  
Which make the music of the soul!  
The cold breeze on her wet hands dim  
Called back her being all to him.

One thought absorbed her—he, her joy!—

• Upon her breast his head was strained—

“ Oh waves, harm not my darling boy !”

Convulsive, mingling kisses rained  
Upon his forehead, lips, and eyes—  
With each mad kiss a life-hope dies.

Oft had he striven to make her show

The fulness of the love she bore—

He knew it, but ne'er saw till now,

Upon this hope-abandoned shore—

Man ne'er receives a longed-for treasure  
Till Time has ta'en its coffin's measure.

A look of triumph and of power,

The old, old look of childish days,

Flashed forth in this extremest hour

With sudden flare and torch-like blaze ;

The moonlit smile his lips did wear,

Was drear, yet more than mortal fair.

And slowly down the beach they move,  
    Locked in a clinging, warm embrace,  
While with a look of speechless love  
    She gazes up into his face—  
Her life is in her eyes,—and they  
Have not one glance for sea or spray.

Still down the shelving beach they glide  
    Amidst wild wat'ry voices—hark!  
The ever-beckoning ebbing tide,  
    With its harsh whisper in the dark—  
His gaze is far across the sea,  
Perchance into Futurity.

They follow the receding wave,  
    As if the ocean were their home,  
Till now their waists the waters lave,  
    And round them whirls the chilly foam;  
But still her eyes are on his face,  
Her soul's last, only resting-place.



A light cloud blurs the patient moon,—

• Patient from her eternity—

Their forms are water-mingled—soon

They *must* appear—there ! foam-wrapped, see  
An object dark ! 'twas but a wave—  
How horribly the waters rave !

This cloud, oh, will it never pass !

A human voice ! or was't the ocean ?

Ah, yes, yon moveless face of glass

Glides forth with slow unhastened motion,  
And lights the wind-indented plain—  
The sea and sands for aye remain.

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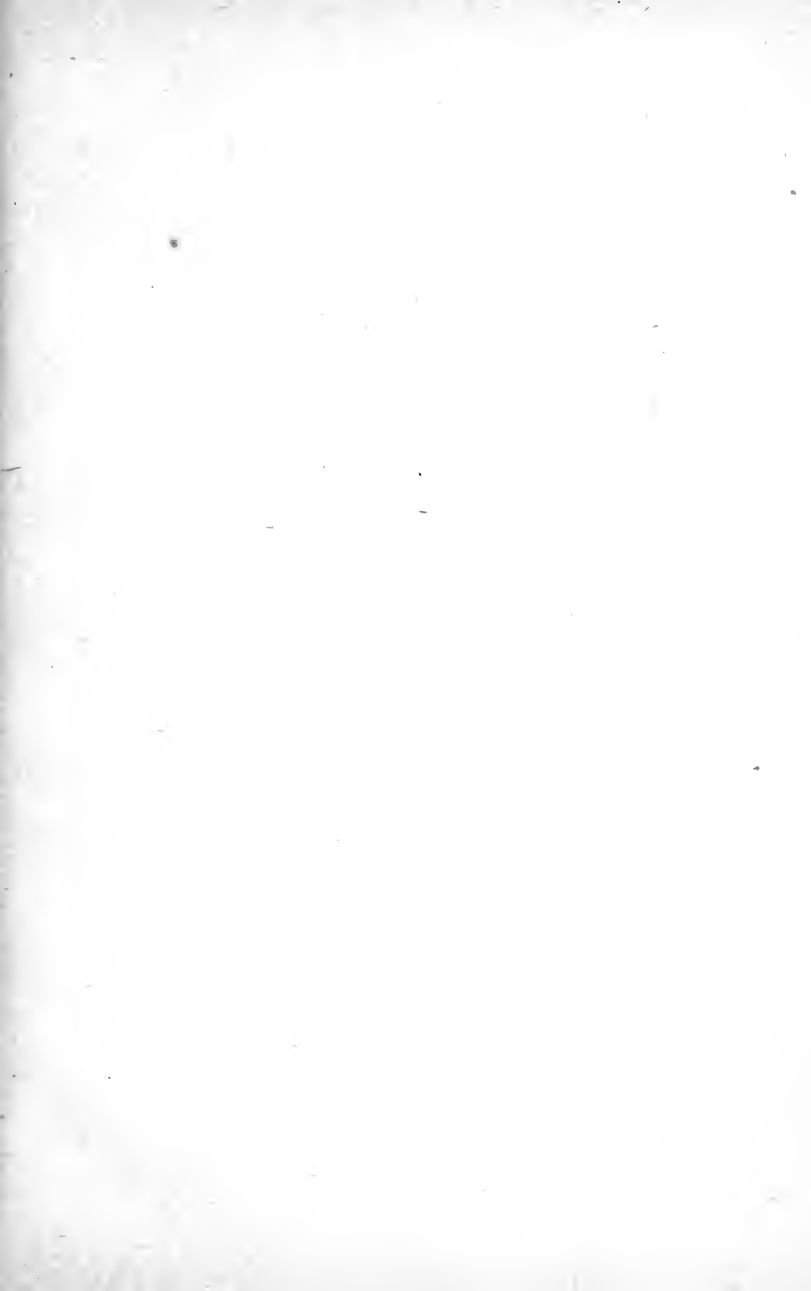
The play is o'er—the actors, where are they ?  
The world's vast theatre grows grim and gray.

No life seems near, save where a glimmer sheens  
On the weird Hercules who shifts the scenes—  
To Time I turn, with a bewildered eye,  
And whisper to the spectre, *Plaudite !*

THE END.











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